

Summary: Conference on Balancing Public Safety and Protection of Historic Places and Collections

Please note that the following information is specific to the January 2002 conference (NOT the July 2002 follow-up conference).

Over 200 people attended the Conference on Balancing Public Safety and Protection of Historic Places on January 22nd in Washington, DC, to discuss the issues raised by 9/11 on historic buildings, landscapes, and collections. The conference was convened to coincide with the winter meeting of the U.S. Conference of Mayors. As Bob Young, Mayor of Augusta, GA, and member of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, pointed out at the luncheon, *"mayors are protectors of their communities. Every issue stops at City Hall."* The meeting brought together mayors and federal, state, and local officials plus architects, landscape architects, security experts, engineers, historic site managers, and professionals with historic preservation responsibilities – many of whom had never met before.

Organized by the **Federal Preservation Institute (FPI)** of the **National Center for Preservation Technology and Training (NCPTT)**, National Park Service, the program addressed the protection of high risk historic icons, alterations to landscapes and civic spaces, protection of collections housed in historic structures, and development of partnerships among local, state, and federal disaster offices. Fran Mainella, Director, National Park Service, opened the conference and presented five guidelines to be used when developing security measures affecting historic places. Following her, the morning plenary session focused on the lessons learned from 9/11. Bernadette Castro, New York State Historic Preservation Officer and Vice Chair, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, spoke about the model partnership among her SHPO office, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the Advisory Council, to expedite review of recovery actions that may have an effect on historic properties. Philip Grone, Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense, spoke about the renovations to the Pentagon that had reduced much of the damage in that attack and how protection at military facilities includes protection of the Department's 14,000 National Register properties. Alan Hantman, Architect of the Capitol, enumerated three initiatives: maintaining our open and free society, preventing attacks before they occur, and protecting our buildings from human loss and property damage. To protect our Capitol, he is making many new uses of technology, including laser scans of the exterior to document the building.

The Conference included four break-out sessions, each offered twice, so that participants could focus on specific issues and examples. These included presentations on protection of U.S. embassies, the Golden Gate Bridge, the 19th century Tweed Courthouse in NYC, the White House and Mall in Washington, DC, and museum collections. Speakers included staff from the Federal Communications Commission talking about the importance of wireless communication, a chief of police, an expert on electronic surveillance, and a representative of small businesses on helping businesses recover quickly and re-open after a disaster.

Joseph Moravec, Commissioner of the Public Buildings Service, General Services Administration, was the luncheon speaker. He stressed that *"our goal is to add features that increase the security of federal workplaces without creating an oppressive climate of fear or destroying timeless aesthetics."* He illustrated this with examples of landscaping and street design that enhance the buildings while increasing protection.

The conference concluded with an afternoon session on risk analysis, the projects in several cities, and the role of the judiciary in sentencing persons found guilty of damaging cultural property. At the end of the day, John Stubbs, Vice President, World Monuments Fund, put the talks into the perspective of world history by showing us that willful acts by man to cultural properties have been by far the most destructive force. But, as he asked, "could it be that the next

cycle in American preservation has been defined by the challenges posed to the country after September 11th?"

Participants praised the conference and recommended holding similar conferences in other locations in the near future. The staff of the Federal Preservation Institute is preparing a summary of the conference. If you are interested in receiving a copy of the summary or information about future conferences, please send an email to NPS_FPI@nps.gov.